

## Practicing the way of Jesus – 1. Discipleship

### Mark chapter 8: 34- 37

*then calling the crowd to join his disciples. He said, if any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways. Take up your cross and follow me. If you try to hang onto your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life, for my sake. And for the sake of the good news, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?*

Let's take this conversation about a person who was confessing really that he'd had a massive wake-up call about how he was following Jesus. He had invited a colleague of his to come to one his Church's Carol services, that colleague that he'd worked with for 10 years, and the first thing that this colleague said to him was. I didn't realize you were a Christian. This person actually came to the Carol service and he loved.

But this guy, this Christian said how can it be that I've worked with this guy for 10 years and nothing about what I've said or how I've lived or how I've worked has given him any indication that I'm a follower of Jesus. Maybe you can see yourself like this Christian at some stage or even now.

The next few weeks leading up to Lent we're starting a new teaching series this morning called Practicing the way of Jesus. Actually, it's going to be the first part of what will be a rolling series at the beginning of each year.

The motivation is principally two-fold. Number one, it's one of our strategic priorities as a church to create a discipleship culture to help one another better follow Jesus, and therefore it needs to always be on the radar. But also because if I'm honest, I have that kind of conversation quite a lot with people.

And actually, I have all sorts of other conversations that on reflection caused me some concern. People say to me that they're a follower of Jesus, but when they talk about their life and I listen to them talk about how they find life and the priorities they make and the decisions they make and how it's going, I often hear stories of busy-ness, anxiety, stress, worrying about children who've not followed in the faith.

People often say to me, I'm really sorry. I've not been at church on Sunday for a while, ... and I have one or two responses. One is, it's okay, it's not all about coming to church on a Sunday.

The other one, if I'm in a not such a good mood, is yeah, I know. Or some version of that.

It's not about going to church, it's about *being the church* and it's about being the church because we are God's people, and that's part of our identity, and to be family together and to gather with one another is actually an imperative for the Christian it's not an optional extra. But the reality is, I speak to lots of people who say, I can't really find time for church, or I can't find time for church my way. I've not been to a small group for months because I just haven't got time.

And I want to say to them, wake up. What's more important than following Jesus in community?

How can anything be more important than that? In my heart is that we would be obviously different to the people around us in such a way that they'd look and they'd see and they'd wonder and they'd ask. We don't get there on our own it's a community effort, and as we'll see, it's a lifestyle that we have to continually work at. And if I'm honest, which I like to do from time to time, even as a shy, retiring introvert, I'm not always any different either. So we're in this together.

I'm going to say right from the start that a lot of the material you're going to hear over the next few weeks is not stolen because I have used some of the material from a guy I have spoken to over the last year called John Mark in America who has done a lot of thinking about this and he's happily giving away his material to

people. So not all of this is my brilliant insight and engaging thoughts. It's a lot of his, but you know, some of it's me and what I want us to do is really ask again, what does it mean to follow Jesus. And how are we actually going to work that out?

You know, we often say, don't we, that we're followers of Jesus, we're Christians, and if I was to ask you, tell me about Jesus. You tell me things like, well, he's the son of God. He's the long-awaited Messiah, the Christ, the King, He's come in glory and will come again in glory. He's the one through whom we are saved and return to the Father, et cetera, et cetera.

But if we were first-century Jews and we were in synagogue right now, not church. One Sabbath morning and Jesus rocked up the category we'd use to understand Him and make sense of Him would be rabbi, which is literally translated teacher.

A rabbi was one, he would travel from town to town with their yolk. Their interpretation of taught art, what we have as the first five books of the Bible, this is what it means to follow God, to be the people of God. This is how I make sense of it. This is my teaching, and people would take up the yoke of their rabbi.

Jesus, of course, he says, that my yoke is easy. It's not easy as in it's dead easy. It's easy as in simple. It's still quite hard actually, but it's beautifully simple. Jesus was a brilliant young rabbi from the Northern part of Israel, and if the 90 times that Jesus talks to somebody in the gospels, 60 of those times, so two thirds, he's called rabbi.

Grab your Bibles and turn to Mark chapter one. I'm just going to try to help you see something real quick.

So Mark chapter one verse 16 as Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the Lake for they were fishermen. Verse 17 come follow me. Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men at once. They left their nets and followed them. When he'd gone a little farther, he saw James, son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat preparing their nets without delay. He called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Him. Jesus.

*Turn over a couple of verses. In chapter two verse 13 and 14* we see the same thing again. Once again, Jesus went out beside the Lake. A large crowd came to him and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. Follow me. Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

*Turn over again. Mark chapter three verse 13.* Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted and they came to him. He appointed 12 designating them Apostles. *notice this*, that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out Demons.

And then finally Mark chapter eight, which we've already heard, which hopefully now makes a bit more sense. Verse 34 then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, if anyone would come after me, *that's better translated*. If anyone wants to follow me, then you must deny yourself.

So you must deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. There's a cost, but constantly, do you see the pattern? Jesus is inviting people to follow him.

Now it's literally the word disciple and the word disciple in the Hebrew it's the word Talmudim. Talmudim is to be a disciple that is the word Jesus is using here. It's also perhaps translated quite well as a follower.

Not in the sense of I've got 2000 and whatever followers on Twitter. Or I'm a first-year student at uni, but as in I'm a student of life.

Actually, I think the best word in English is the word apprentice, so let's work with that over the next few weeks, Jesus is inviting people to become his apprentice. To follow a rabbi was to do an apprenticeship with him.

Now, this kind of discipleship wasn't invented by Jesus. Lots of rabbis before him had done this, and actually, it wasn't even invented by rabbis. Plato began it with his disciple, Socrates. This was part and parcel of the first-century world. This is normal. It should be normal in the 21st-century church, ... but it's not for all sorts of reasons, but it's key to spiritual formation.

If you want to become newly, truly, fully gloriously human. If you want to be saved from stuff and saved for that which God has saved you and become that which you are made to be, then you need to be a follower of Jesus in this sense, you need to become an apprentice of Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth.

To understand this, we have to know the schooling the teaching. So back in the day, we are told there were three schools or three houses of learning for Jewish kids at the time of Jesus. For basically six to 12-year-olds you went to "bet sefer" that was known as the house of book, the book where you would read and write and learn math, but primarily you would memorize the Torah first five books in the Bible. You'd memorize it.

Is Deuteronomy your go-to book to read in the bible? Well the 6-12yr olds spent their life learning the first five books and you've got to age 12 and most kids stopped at this point.

Girls were married off by 13 to 14. And boys, unless you were bright you went back and worked with your dad and you did what your dad did, whether you liked it or not. The brighter kids went onto "Bet Talmid" for another couple of years. That's known as the house of learning, and that was essentially full-time education. You would learn from a full time paid rabbi where guess what you did? You memorize the rest of the old Testament.

I'd be the kind of kid that was like, can I get to be a carpenter or signwriter? The other sounds so dull, except actually it was a huge privilege to learn.

And at the end of that discipleship period, the rabbi would interrogate you and test you to see whether you've got what it takes to go to the next level, which is "Bet Midrash" house of study, and if you are able to dialogue with the scriptures, if you were able to debate with your rabbi and understand his yoke, but also perhaps begin to show signs of your own yoke emerge in your own teaching, then actually you would be invited.

If you were the best of the best of the best, only in Tibet Midrash, and what the rabbi would say to you is, come follow me. I want you because you're the best of the best of the best. I want you to come and join with me and now we're going to do the proper apprenticeship. And from ages 14 through to 30, Jesus was a rabbi who was trained.

And at the end of Midrash, the disciples of the rabbi would eventually be told, you've got it 16 years, 15-16 years later, off you go. Now you go have a crack at it. You now go and find your own disciples and you now go and do the same thing again. Okay, so that's the context to Jesus the rabbi going around and asking all sorts of people, come follow me. Were they the best of the best of the best? No, they're fishermen. They left school at 12 they didn't have what it takes to get on to the "bet Talmud" program, never mind mid rash. He's standing before the crowds, the poor, the destitute, the unloved. And he says to any of you, any of you who wants to come after me, follow me. And they scratching their heads some of them. But others saw that something new was being offered here and so of course, they drop their nets. Of course, they leave their family. Of course, they follow him because a rabbi believes ..... in you.

And his yoke, his teaching is so beautiful. It's so different. It tastes and speaks of this kingdom that we've heard about, that we've memorized all the scriptures about. We've just not experienced it. Maybe, maybe he is the one that everyone said would come and so why would you not... follow.... him?

Now you had three goals as an apprentice. To be with your rabbi. Number one. So notice Mark 3: 14 but they might be with him. He asked them to follow him so that they might be with him just to be with him. This was 24/7 discipleship. It wasn't a course for eight weeks every term. This was you lived with them, you ate with them, you slept with them, you traveled with them, you did everything with them.

There was this blessing that was kind of spoken out over people as a kind of a way of saying, you know, this is what we would want for you, and it goes like this. **May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.** In other words, may you have been so close to someone, this rabbi, that as you've traveled the dirt tracks of your world, following them around, learning from them, doing what they did, that by the end of the day you're literally because you've been behind them.

You're covered in their dust. That was the blessing, but that was a good thing. That was the goal.

The second objective was having been around them is to, is to become like the rabbi, because it's caught, ultimately not taught. So if you watch kids, they imitate their parents. We watch and observe as kids and we become like that, which is around us. Actually, that doesn't change as adults. So all of you keep good company.

Now, Jesus talks about fishers of men, doesn't he? but it gets lost in translation. Fishers of men was a well-known phrase for a great teacher, like a rock star rabbi, and he's saying, you come follow me I'll make you fishers. And I'll make you the kind of rabbis that everyone's going to be like, wow, we will be the kind of teachers that are going to change the world. I'm a great teacher and if you hang out with me, I'll show you how to do it, make you like me.

And we live in an age, don't we? Quite different from this. If you spend any time with teenagers, young adults, students you'll know that they live in a culture that says be true to who you are. You're a snowflake, unique and fragile, and actually, there's no one like you. And that's true, but actually, we're not wired to be this kind of individual, unique thing that does life on our own where we're invited into and called to be family. And in the day of Jesus, it wasn't like that at all the aim was to become a carbon copy of your rabbi. They literally copied everything. Now you can critique that. But the idea was that you would take on the character and integrity of someone who's been around God.

And finally, **goal number three** would be to do what your rabbi does. So notice in Mark chapter three, the goal at the end is that he would send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. That is shorthand, by the way, for living out the kingdom. It's more than just those two things. But the point of apprenticeship was that at the end of the day, your rabbi would look at you and say, go make disciples. What does Jesus say just before he returns to heaven? to his disciples? go and make disciples.

They've done three years. Not 15 they've done three years of apprenticeship. They can't read or write. They've not done all of the other stuff, but he's sufficiently confident that they have got what it takes to carry on what he started that he breaths upon them, He commissions them.

You and I are the same, and he says, now go and make disciples. Get on with it. Go do what I've been doing. You're ready to go do it.

Do you feel ready? Do you feel equipped?

No, but that's what the Holy Spirit came for, to equip and to empower us to bring these two things together. And so actually, yes, we can go do it **in the name of Jesus** and **in the power of the Spirit**.

Okay. Flip this round to our context. What does this mean now for 21st-century discipleship? I think it means to order your life around the exact same three goals. I think you and I are called to **be with Jesus** to **become like Jesus** and to **do what Jesus did**. That's discipleship.

That's how you become a follower of Jesus in the fullest, most mature sense. Those are the three things that must be at the center of our lives. We will look at them briefly.

Number one is being with Jesus, *this is* the priority.

The other two flow from this run. Now we are really good at charismatic evangelical churches doing the other two, but not doing the first. We know we should be with him. We know he should have our, whatever you call it, quiet times or devotion times. We know we should do silence and solitude and fasting and resting and all of that.

We're going to get there, but actually, we're not very good at it. We're quite good at doing courses and consuming books and conferences and podcasts to help us become more like him. Well, in reality, all that means is we know more about him. Because you can only become like what you hang out with.

And we're very good at doing the stuff he did, just not necessarily *in the way* that he did it because we've not learned it from him. This is our priority though. John Mark says this. *"It's only possible through being in a constant state of awareness of and connection to the Holy Spirit"*.

That's how you do it. That's how Jesus intended it for us because that's how he did it, which is why he says, don't go and start anything until the promised gift of the Spirit comes, Pentecost. Only then do you go, because you can't do it on your own. It's power, but it's also presence. This is the baseline for all living in the kingdom of God.

So you and I, if we don't carve out time morning, day and night, every day of every week of every month of every year, we will not be with him sufficiently to be able to become like him and learn to do what he did. Jesus gave us the most beautiful picture of this in John 15 the vine and the branches, it's really simple.

He says, you remain in me and I'll remain in you, you stay rooted to me. Paul says in Ephesians 3, be rooted and established in love, and I will bear fruit through you. Faithfulness is our responsibility. Fruitfulness is the by-product of faithfulness.

To remain in me. A better word abides, Abide in me. Learn how to live *in* my presence, *in* the truth of who you are *in* Christ is Paul's shorthand for this. So Dallas Willard, he died about 4yrs ago. He says this, *"The first and most basic thing we can do and must do is to keep God before our minds. This is the fundamental secrets of caring for our souls, our parts in thus practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to him. In the early time of our practicing, we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God."*....

He has such a way of putting it, *"..."* but these are habits, not the laws of gravity he says, and they can be broken. A new grace-filled habit will replace the former ones. As we take intentional steps towards keeping God before us, soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the North.

Note this, *"if God is the great longing of our souls, he will become the Pollstar of our inwards beings"*. His point is that living in a constant state of awareness of and connection to the Holy Spirit takes practice, hence Practicing the way of Jesus.

So John Mark has this brilliant way of explaining it. He says it's essentially about learning to be in two places at the same time. At your desk clearing your emails and in the presence of the Father, at the kitchen sink scrubbing the pots and pans and in the presence of the Father, in traffic trying to get through the roadworks wondering why it could not be done at night, and in the presence of the Father. That's what abiding is. Because we can't spend all day just quietly in a little corner of the safest part of our house with some nice worship music on and a candle going, Jesus. Nothing would ever happen. It's from that place that we learn to abide, which is why rhythms of prayer and all that stuff are so important.

**Number two**, becoming like Jesus. Out of this place of abiding, the goal is to become like Jesus. Now, it's not literally to become like Him as in a carbon copy, he changes the rules slightly. It is to become gloriously, truly, fully human. A Christ-like version of you. One operating in the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit. One who knows their gifts and calling. One who loves and serves. One who lives out the grace and generosity of God. It's what in the olden days used to be called sanctification, which sounds quite painful. It's better probably called spiritual formation.

That's the word I prefer. This is about spiritual formation becoming who you really are in God. Now, Dallas Willard again, because basically, he says it better than anyone else. Here's what he says. This is the best definition I've ever come across of spiritual formation. *“Spiritual formation in the Christian tradition is a process of increasingly being possessed and permeated by such character traits as we walk in the easy yoke of discipleship with Jesus, our teacher increasingly being possessed and permeated by the character traits of Jesus.”* That's what spiritual formation is. So here's the rub we're all disciples of something. We're all disciples of someone, who are you following? Do you take your inspiration from Jesus of Nazareth or from some famous celebrity, or an admired historical person? Are you more shaped and formed by Jesus or your mother?

The question is not am I being formed, but by what and into what am I being formed? What's the trajectory of your character arc? Who are you becoming? Are you on track to more and more fully express the nature of God through your personality, your gender, your context, your gifts, your passions, or not?

You know for me I want to become like Jesus from the inside out. I want people to be around me and go, oh he was like being around Jesus.

Not because I want you all to be oh let's be like the Holy vicar. But because I think that's what it is to be redeemed and made new. I don't just want behavior modification, I don't want a spiritual straight jacket so I learn how to behave properly but everything inside of me is out of kilt with that, which is often what we do if we missed the first of those three things, right? We do the right things, but we haven't really changed on the inside.

Now, here's the rub. It takes practice. It takes practice. You don't learn it instantly you have to learn it, it's an apprenticeship. We actually have to relearn how to be human. Kids naturally do in all sorts of ways, and then they unlearn it because of growing up. It takes practice and it requires time, but it also requires community .... Because, guess what? You can't do it on your own.

This is why there's this thing called the church, and as much as it might do your head in, it's your family. Get over it, learn to love it, make yourself part of it. You will be someone who both blesses and is blessed by it if you do.

Third, and we'll say less about this cause I'm running out of time. Do what Jesus did. That's the third aim of a disciple, a follower of Jesus. Now, this is tricky for us because yes he was a rabbi, but he was also the Son of God. And so some of the things he did we can't do, but we can imitate him. We can emulate Him in spirit and truth. We can lay down our life for the sake of other people, even if we don't literally hang on a cross.

The goal of someone following Jesus should include, yes, becoming like Him, being with Him, becoming like Him, but also being someone who's more and more able to minister on behalf of the kingdom of God.

Here are some things we see Jesus doing throughout the gospels here's a little checklist.

Preaching the gospel, all sorts of ways to do that.

Teaching the way, it's what I'm doing now.

Healing the sick, casting out demons, eating and drinking with people far from God, I like that one.

Standing up against political and religious corruption, doing justice, peacemaking, praying, prophesying.

Now the body of Christ means of course, that we're not all going to do all of those equally, but actually the more you hang out with Jesus, the more you'll find yourself able to do or at least engage with those all in some way or another.

Partly because you might be around someone who does those things. One or two of those things in a particularly wonderful way.

The goal, in other words, is not to just be around Jesus and learn from him so you can talk about him and you can kind of copy Him. That for you it actually becomes innate in you to be someone who lives from the presence of God into the world in such a way that Hillcrest/Hamilton becomes more like the kingdom of God than it is already. That's mission and evangelism right there.

So discipleship following Jesus I want to suggest as we start this series is a life built around these three goals. Following Jesus cannot be a hobby. It cannot be the last thing that goes into your diary.

It cannot be something you fit in around your other commitments, not if you want to become that which you were saved for, not if you want to become a mature fully-fledged child of God who makes a difference in the world who experiences the life God intended. You can't do it any other way, which is why Jesus demands ... all. He gave all. So that you can have it all, but it requires us giving it back to Him. It's really not rocket science. You cannot, cannot access the life on offer unless you make it your primary focus.

You see following Jesus makes the most sense when it's the whole point of your life. If it's not the whole point of your life, guess what? It will just be disappointing, frustrating and exhausting. It doesn't mean giving up your job. It doesn't mean you suddenly going to become a monk or a Minister, although it might mean that. It means that your focus is your apprenticeship to Jesus and everything about you is part of that journey.

So quickly back to Mark 8 just to notice a couple of things and then we'll finish the invitation. I already said this. I want to reiterate it, is to become an apprentice. Verse 34 **come after me. Follow me.** He's not saying, come and join my club. Become a Christian. Learn the rules. Carry on the institution.

He says, come on, learn how to be human with me. Come and work with me as I join with God in the renewal of all things to use our language. The word Christian is only used three times in the New Testament. Did you know that? And each time it's used, it's used negatively. The word disciple, apprentice is used in contrast 268 times. More than any of the meaning for what it is to be a son or daughter of God. The one that follows after that, it's family. So apprentice and then family. They're the two things that should define your Christian spirituality. And notice I already said this, but I'm reiterating it. Verse 35 chapter 8 "it's for whoever wants to follow" Him, whoever. Jesus changes the rules. It's not about us showing the rabbi that we've got what it takes. It's us realizing the rabbi has already done it and he frees us up to become like him. All we have to do is spend time with him because when we spend time with him, we'll become like Him. And when we become like Him we will do the things that he did because that's what it is to be human. We will be restored and made new and it will become natural and innate for us.

And so here, one more time Dallas Willard, *"the greatest issue facing the world today with all its heartbreaking needs is whether those who by profession as in I profess this or culture or identified as Christians will become disciples, students, apprentices, practitioners of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from*

*Him how to live the life of the kingdom of the heavens into every corner of human existence. You can call yourself a Christian, he would say, but not to be a follower of Jesus.”*

This is why Jesus says some of you will get to heaven, and I'll say, get away from me I didn't know you. Can you think of anything worse than spending your entire life doing the Christian thing but not really following Jesus, *being with him, becoming like him, doing what he did* and getting to the end and Him going, I'm sorry to have we met? Now he's provoking, he's using language there to provoke us. Grace abounds, but .... flip it around, why would you not want this? Why would you just do Christianity? It's hard, it's boring on its own. Why would you not want to become a disciple?

Whoever practices this will become, whoever practices, practice, practice, practice it's woven through Jesus' teaching. The way of following Jesus. The way of life in Christ takes practice. Practice doesn't just mean trying really, really hard again and again and again, like good works. Just keep going. Have another crack, good effort.

It's not about trying, it's about training. Apprenticeship is a training, isn't it? I did this when signwriting the idea is that I would eventually know how to sign things on my own. I learned. I was trained. I wasn't coming and having a crack at it. And that's what discipleship is. It's training, not trying. Another analogy would be anyone ever run a marathon for the first time.

You don't just decide you're going to do the Round the Bridges 10k turn up, have a crack at it. Right? I'll just try. I'll be all right. You learn, you train, you do a couple of miles, and then you do three and then 4 and you find people to help you and you get some good shoes and get a coach or friend to do it with you or whatever, it's the same principle.

So here's what I want you to understand. You and I are invited by Jesus to follow him. He's saying to you again at the beginning of 2020 when you follow me, will you come and be an apprentice? Actually, it's a lifelong apprenticeship. I love that. We've got a church here with people who are older than me. Who are still following Jesus with everything they've got. I love that. I want to be like that when I'm your age.

It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationship with God in a casual or haphazard manner. There will be a need for some intentional commitment and some reorganization in our own lives, but there is nothing that will enrich our lives more than a deeper and clearer perception of God's presence in the routine of daily living.

We have got to learn the spiritual practices, what some people call the spiritual disciplines. We practice this stuff and the spiritual practices, things like silence, solitude, prayer, fasting, Sabbath-keeping, reading the Bible and so on. They help us do it, they're the tool. The practice is the things that we learn how to do *so* that we can abide *so* that we can apprentice ourselves to Jesus.

It's a means to an end. To live the way of Jesus takes practice. It takes time. It requires a community. We need to learn together how to do it. So the next few weeks and then later in the year and through other things we're going to try together to teach one another some of these practices were beginning next week by looking at the practice of keeping Silence and Solitude.

But today I really am simply saying, are you up for following Jesus in 2020? like becoming an apprentice of Jesus?

Not a churchgoer, not a Christian, but someone who is obviously different because they've been around Jesus and they become like Him, and as a result, they naturally do the things that He did and their world changes as a result. If you're up for that, would you like to stand? I'm going to pray for us as we finish.

If you're comfortable with this, I'd love you just to perhaps close your eyes and unopen your hands as a sign to God and that, Yeah, here I am and I can't do it without your Holy Spirit. No one can, not even, Jesus could do it about the Spirit of God.

And perhaps just in the quiet of your hearts as you ask the Spirit to minister to you in some way or another, just communicate your heart to God.

What do you need to say? Some of you, if you're honest, it's been a while since you have been around him. We might need to reintroduce yourself, for your sake. He knows who you are. It might be that your heart's like fizzing with potential and excitement and you'd like, come on God. It might be that you've got disappointment and hurt and pain, that trips you up and gets in the way. Almost certainly for most of us, there'll be some practical reality checks that we need to deal with. Our diary, our ways of life. Most of us are over-committed and undisciplined.

### **SILENCE**

Just before Jesus finished commissioning those disciples to go and make more disciples, he breathed on them.

My peace I give you.

### **SILENCE**

So what brother Lawrence called practicing the presence of God. That's what John Mark calls being in two places at the same time. Peace in the midst of work and children and mortgages, retirement, older age and tidying up and aging, family and difficult relationships and concerns and fears and health issues. Living in and from the presence of God. Because by the Holy Spirit we get rooted and established there. So God, will you do that now by your Holy Spirit. Breathe upon us. Your peace at the beginning of this year.

### **SILENCE**

**Thank you**

**Amen.**